



DELPHI
CLASSICS

Edward de Vere

Complete Works

DELPHI POETS SERIES

DELPHI POETS SERIES

**Edward de Vere,
17th Earl of Oxford**

(1550-1604)



The Life and Works of Edward de Vere

Brief Introduction: Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford
Complete Works of Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford

The Letter

The Bedingfield Letter

The Resources

Edward de Vere (1900) by Sidney Lee
"Shakespeare" Identified (1920) by J. Thomas Looney

The Delphi Classics Catalogue

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the text.

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Version 1

DELPHI POETS SERIES

Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford



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Edward de Vere - Delphi Poets Series



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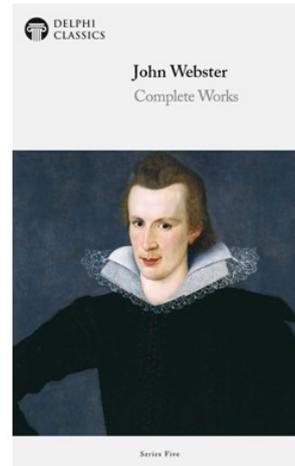
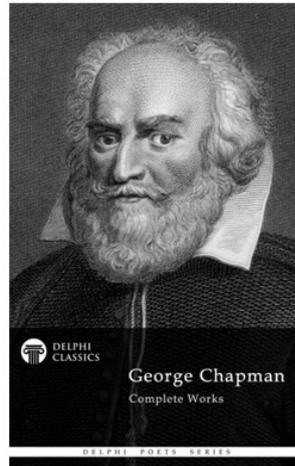
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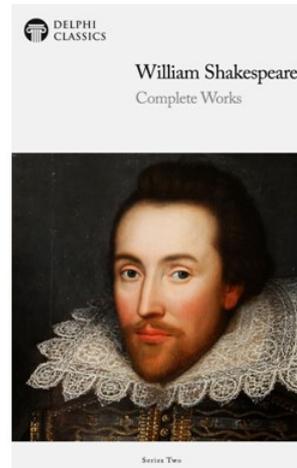
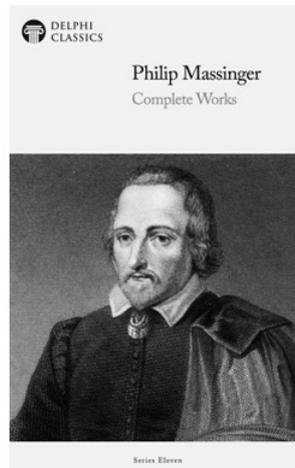
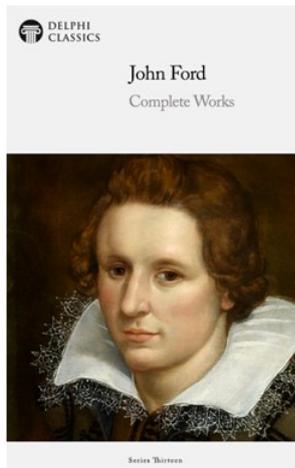
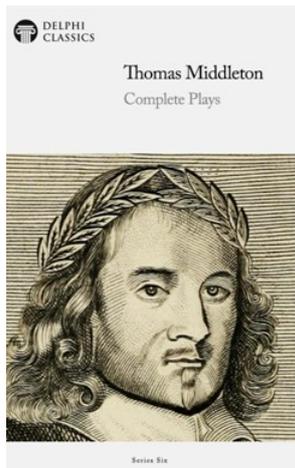
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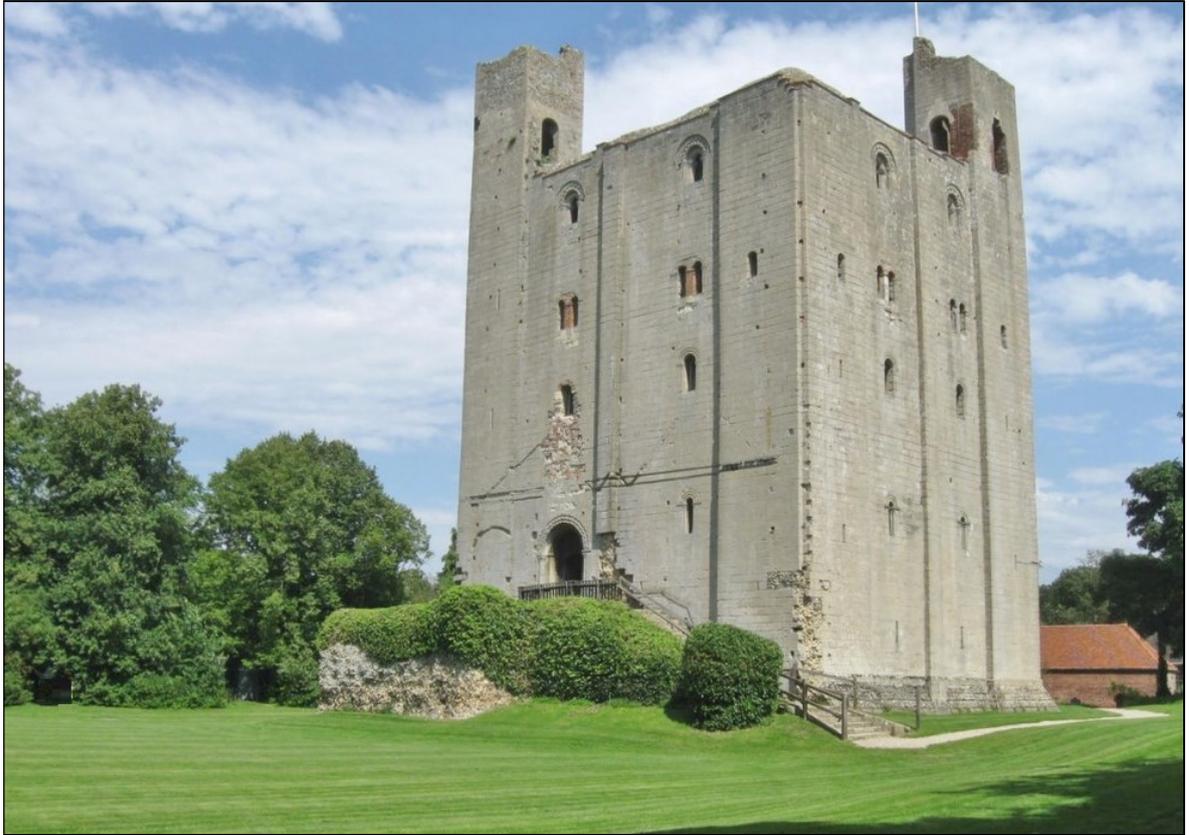


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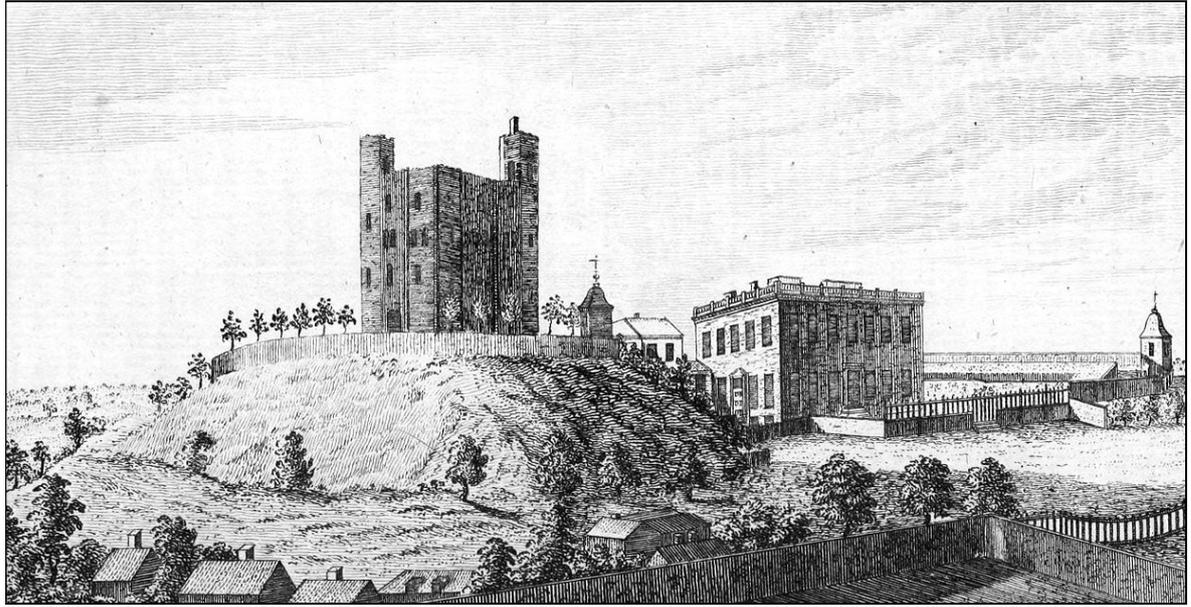


When reading poetry on an eReader, it is advisable to use a small font size and landscape mode, which will allow the lines of poetry to display correctly.

The Life and Works of Edward de Vere



Hedingham Castle, in the village of Castle Hedingham, Essex, is one of England's best preserved Norman keeps— Edward de Vere's birthplace.



An eighteenth century depiction of the keep



Portrait of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, formerly owned by the Duke of St. Albans, currently in the possession of the Minos Miller Trust Fund. The identification and attribution of this portrait is questioned on the grounds of fashion and artistic style, according to some.

Brief Introduction: Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford



An English courtier poet of the Elizabethan era, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604) was heir to the second oldest earldom in the kingdom and a sought-after patron of the arts. He was also noted by his contemporaries as a lyric poet and court playwright, though his volatile temperament precluded him from attaining any courtly or governmental responsibility and contributed to the dissipation of his estate.

Edward de Vere was born at the de Vere ancestral home, Hedingham Castle, in Essex, northeast of London. He was the only son of John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford, and his second wife, Margery Golding and was probably named to honour Edward VI, from whom he received a gilded christening cup. Both of his parents had established court connections: the 16th Earl accompanying Princess Elizabeth from her house arrest at Hatfield to the throne, and the countess being appointed a maid of honour in 1559. After his father's death in 1562, twelve-year-old Edward became a ward of Queen Elizabeth I and was sent to live in the household of her principal advisor, Sir William Cecil. He married Cecil's daughter, Anne, with whom he had five children. It was an unsuccessful marriage. Oxford was estranged from her for five years and refused to acknowledge he was the father of their first child.

A champion jousting, Oxford travelled widely throughout France and the many states of Italy. He was among the first to compose love poetry at the Elizabethan court and was praised as a playwright, though none of the plays have survived. A stream of dedications praised Oxford for his generous patronage of literary, religious, musical, and medical works and he patronised both adult and boy acting companies, as well as musicians, tumblers, acrobats and performing animals.

In the early 1580s, Oxford fell out of favour with the Queen and was exiled from court and briefly imprisoned in the Tower of London when his mistress, Anne Vavasour, one of Elizabeth's maids of honour, gave birth to his son in the palace. Vavasour was also incarcerated and the affair instigated violent street brawls between Oxford and her kinsmen. He was reconciled to the Queen in 1583 at Theobalds, but all opportunities for advancement had been lost. In 1586 Elizabeth granted Oxford £1,000 annually — a grand sum at that time — to relieve the financial distress caused by his extravagance and the sale of his income-producing lands for ready money. After the death of his first wife, Oxford married Elizabeth Trentham, one of the Queen's maids of honour, with whom he had an heir, Henry de Vere, Viscount Bulbeck (later 18th Earl of Oxford). The poet died in 1604, having spent the entirety of his inherited estates.

Although a collection of Oxford's verses was never officially published in his lifetime, numerous manuscripts of his poems were circulated widely in courtly circles. Three of his poems, "When wert thou born desire", "My mind to me a kingdom is", and "Sitting alone upon my thought", are among the texts that repeatedly appear in the surviving sixteenth century manuscript miscellanies and poetical anthologies. His earliest published poem was "The labouring man that tills the fertile soil" in Thomas Bedingfield's translation of *Cardano's Comforte* (1573). Bedingfield's dedication to Oxford is dated 1 January 1572. In addition to his poem, Oxford also contributed a commendatory letter setting forth the reasons why Bedingfield should publish the work.

In 1576 eight of Oxford's poems were published in the poetry miscellany *The Paradise of Dainty Devises*. According to the introduction, all the poems in the collection were meant to be sung, but Oxford's were almost the only genuine love songs in the collection. His "What cunning can express" was published in *The Phoenix Nest* (1593) and republished in England's *Helicon* (1600). "Who taught thee first to sigh alas my heart" appeared in *The Teares of Fancie* (1593). *Brittons Bowre of Delight* (1597) published "If women could be fair and yet not fond" under Oxford's name, but the attribution today is widely doubted.

Contemporary critics praised Oxford's skill as a poet. William Webbe names him as "the most excellent" of Elizabeth's courtier poets. Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) places him first on a list of courtier poets and includes an excerpt from "When wert thou born desire" as an example of "his excellance and wit". Puttenham also states that "highest praise" should be given to Oxford and Richard Edwardes for "Comedy and Enterlude". Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia* (1598) names Oxford first by social rank of 17 playwrights listed that are "the best for comedy amongst us", and he also appears first on a list of seven Elizabethan courtly poets "who honoured Poesie with their pens and practice" in Henry Peacham's 1622 *The Compleat Gentleman*.

Since the 1920's, Oxford has been regarded as one of the most prominent candidates for the 'true' authorship of Shakespeare's works — a debate now known as The Oxfordian theory of Shakespeare authorship. Oxford's candidacy as sole author was first proposed by J. Thomas Looney in his 1920 book *Shakespeare Identified*. It contends that Edward de Vere wrote the plays and poems commonly ascribed to Shakespeare. While historians and literary scholars overwhelmingly reject alternative authorship candidates, including Oxford, public interest in the Oxfordian theory continues. After the 1920s, the Oxfordian theory became the most popular alternative Shakespeare authorship theory. The 2011 period drama film *Anonymous* represents a fictionalised version of the life of Edward de Vere, suggesting that the peer was the actual author of Shakespeare's plays, in accordance with Looney's theory.

The convergence of documentary evidence of the type used by academics for authorial attribution – title pages, testimony by other contemporary poets and historians, and official records – sufficiently establishes Shakespeare's authorship for the overwhelming majority of Shakespeare scholars and literary historians, and no such documentary evidence links Oxford to Shakespeare's works. Oxfordians, however, reject the historical record and argue that circumstantial evidence supports Oxford's authorship, proposing that the contradictory historical evidence is part of a conspiracy that falsified the record to protect the identity of the real author. Scholarly literary specialists consider the Oxfordian method of interpreting the plays and poems as grounded in an autobiographical fallacy and argue that using his works to infer and construct a hypothetical author's biography is both unreliable and logically unsound.

Oxfordian arguments rely heavily on biographical allusions; adherents find correspondences between incidents and circumstances in Oxford's life and events in Shakespeare's plays, sonnets and longer poems. The case also relies on perceived parallels of language, idiom and thought between Shakespeare's works and Oxford's own poetry and letters. Oxfordians claim that marked passages in Oxford's Bible can be linked to Biblical allusions in Shakespeare's plays. That no plays survive under Oxford's name is also important to the Oxfordian theory. Oxfordians interpret certain sixteenth and seventeenth century literary allusions as indicating that Oxford was one of the more prominent suppressed anonymous writers of the day. In this scenario,

Shakespeare was either a “front man” or “play-broker” that published the plays under his own name or was merely an actor with a similar name, misidentified as the playwright since the first Shakespeare biographies of the early 1700s.

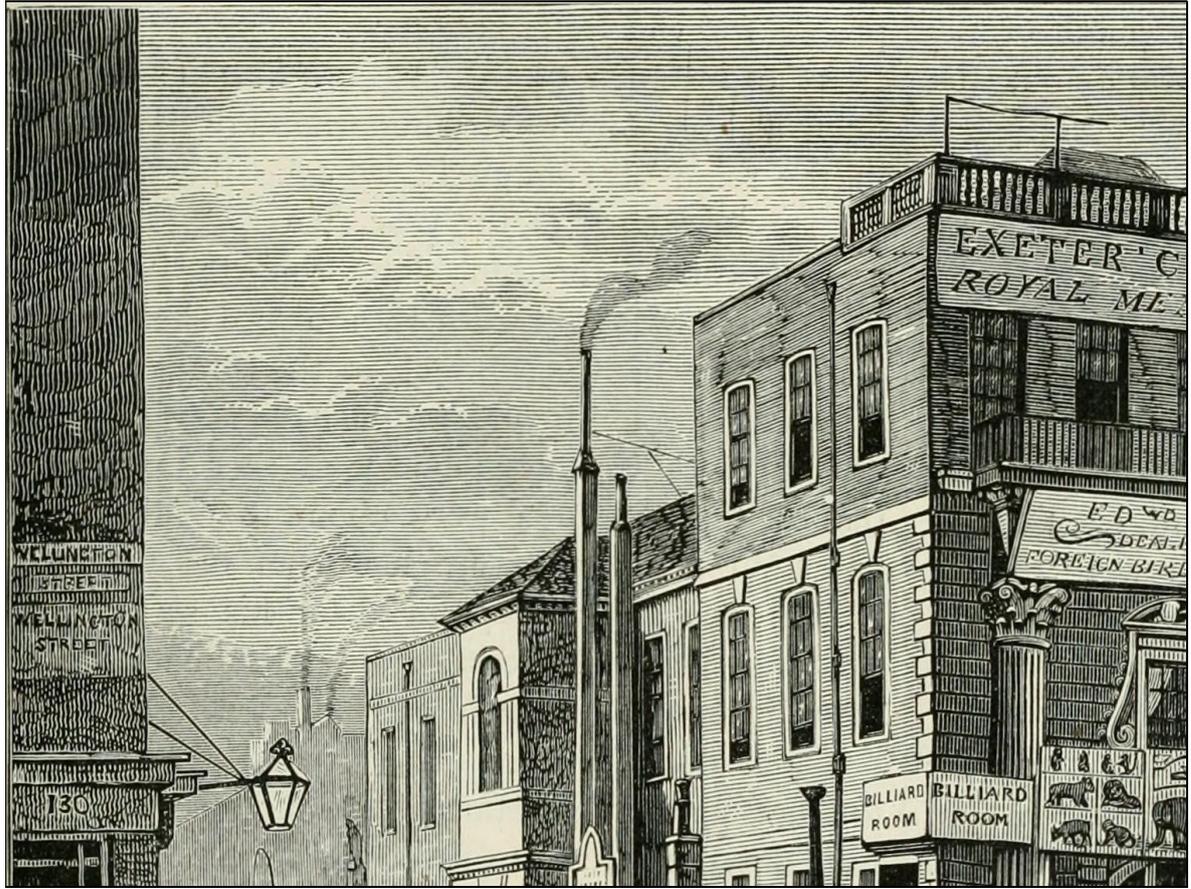
The most compelling evidence against the Oxfordian theory is de Vere’s death in 1604, since the generally accepted chronology of Shakespeare’s plays places the composition of approximately twelve of the plays after that date. Oxfordians respond that the annual publication of “new” or “corrected” Shakespeare plays stopped in 1604, and that the dedication to Shakespeare’s Sonnets implies that the author was dead prior to their publication in 1609. Oxfordians believe the reason so many of the “late plays” show evidence of revision and collaboration is because they were completed by other playwrights after Oxford’s death.

Several of Oxford’s lyric works have survived and are presented in this edition of his poetry. Steven W. May, an authority on Oxford’s poetry, attributes sixteen poems definitely, and four possibly, to Oxford noting that these are probably “only a good sampling” as “both Webbe (1586) and Puttenham (1589) rank him first among the courtier poets, an eminence he probably would not have been granted, despite his reputation as a patron, by virtue of a mere handful of lyrics”.

May describes Oxford as a “competent, fairly experimental poet working in the established modes of mid-century lyric verse” and his poetry as “examples of the standard varieties of mid-Elizabethan amorous lyric”. In 2004 May suggested that Oxford’s poetry was “one man’s contribution to the rhetorical mainstream of an evolving Elizabethan poetic” and challenged readers to distinguish any of it from “the output of his mediocre mid-century contemporaries”. Also, C. S. Lewis wrote that Oxford’s poetry shows “a faint talent”, but is “for the most part undistinguished and verbose.”



William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley (1520-1598), was an English statesman, the chief adviser of Queen Elizabeth I for most of her reign, twice Secretary of State (1550–1553 and 1558–1572) and Lord High Treasurer from 1572. He welcomed Oxford into his family after the passing of his father.



Cecil House (later Exeter House) on the Strand, London — the Cecil family home where Oxford spent his adolescent years



St John's College, Cambridge — where Oxford was educated



William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley, the Queen's Secretary of State and de Vere's father-in-law, c. 1571



The Royal Palace of Whitehall where the Earl of Oxford married Anne Cecil



Anne Vavasour, maid of honour to Elizabeth I, mother of de Vere's illegitimate son

6^d THE PARADYSE
of daynty deuises,

aptly furnished, with sundry pithie and learned inuentionst
deuise.d and written for the most part, by M. Edwards,
sometimes of her Maiesties Chappel: the rest, by
sundry learned Gentlemen, both of honor,
and woorshippe.

viz.

S. Barnarde.	Jasper Heywood.
E. O.	F. K. a
L. Vaux.	M. Beuve.
3 D. S.	R. Hill.
M. Yloop, with others.	



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don by Henry Disle, dwelling in
Pauls Churchyard, at the South west doore
of Saint Pauls Church, and are there
so be sold.

1576.

Eight poems by Oxford were published in 'The Paradise of Dainty Devises', 1576



John Thomas Looney (1870-1944), the English school teacher that originated the Oxfordian theory, arguing that Edward de Vere was the true author of Shakespeare's plays.

Complete Works of Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford



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Winged with Desire (before 1582)
Love Compared to a Tennis-Play
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Love thy Choice
Were I a King

Spurious Poems

Anne Vavasour's Echo (c. 1581)
My Mind to me a Kingdom is
Woman's Changeableness (before 1587)
I do increase their wand'ring wits



A seventeenth century portrait of Oxford, based on lost 1575 original, National Portrait Gallery, London

Labour and its Reward (1573)



This panegyric poem was originally prefaced to *Cardanus's Comfort*, Thomas Bedingfield's translation of *De Consolatione* by Girolamo Cardano. It was accompanied by a letter written by Oxford in praise of the book.

The labouring man that tills the fertile soil,
And reaps the harvest fruit, hath not indeed
The gain, but pain; and if for all his toil
He gets the straw, the lord will have the seed.

The manchet fine falls not unto his share;
On coarsest cheat his hungry stomach feeds.
The landlord doth possess the finest fare;
He pulls the flowers, he plucks but weeds.

The mason poor that builds the lordly halls,
Dwells not in them; they are for high degree;
His cottage is compact in paper walls,
And not with brick or stone, as others be.

The idle drone that labours not at all,
Sucks up the sweet of honey from the bee;
Who worketh most to their share least doth fall,
With due desert reward will never be.

The swiftest hare unto the mastiff slow
Oft-times doth fall, to him as for a prey;
The greyhound thereby doth miss his game we know
For which he made such speedy haste away.

So he that takes the pain to pen the book,
Reaps not the gifts of goodly golden muse;
But those gain that, who on the work shall look,
And from the sour the sweet by skill doth choose,

For he that beats the bush the bird not gets,
But who sits still and holdeth fast the nets.

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End of Sample